



# NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

**BRADLEY J. SCHLOZMAN**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **TWO DEFENDANTS SENTENCED IN MORTGAGE FRAUD**

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** – Bradley J. Schlozman, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a former Northland mortgage broker and a former real estate appraiser were sentenced in federal court today in separate but related cases involving a property flipping scheme and mortgage fraud. Their fraud was part of a larger scheme that involved nearly 300 fraudulent loans worth almost \$20 million.

**Avonda Nicodemus**, 33, of Kansas City, a former account executive at Ameriquest Mortgage in Gladstone, and **Peggy Snodgrass**, 40, of Independence, who operated a real estate appraisal business in Raytown, Mo., were sentenced in separate appearances before U.S. District Judge Fernando J. Gaitan. **Nicodemus** was sentenced to five years of probation, including four months of electronic monitoring, and ordered to pay \$1,158,501 in restitution. Under the terms of probation, **Nicodemus** may not work as a loan broker or in the mortgage business. **Snodgrass** was sentenced to five years of probation and ordered to pay \$1,149,188 in restitution.

**Nicodemus** and **Snodgrass** are the first defendants sentenced in the mortgage fraud scheme in which six defendants have pleaded guilty. The largest mortgage fraud case ever prosecuted in the Western District of Missouri, the scheme encompassed 289 fraudulent loans totaling \$19.6 million, with a total actual loss of approximately \$11.8 million for the financial institutions that were defrauded.

**Brent Michael Barber**, 41, of Belton, Mo., pleaded guilty on Feb. 23, 2006, to 104 counts contained in two federal indictments. Those indictments, as well as a third federal indictment for which **Barber** was convicted by a jury, involve separate schemes to defraud mortgage lending companies of millions of dollars.

**Barber** admitted that he recruited people to purchase rental properties, assuring them that he would find renters for the properties and sell the properties a short time later, so that the victim-investors would have no financial risk and a guaranteed quick profit. Then he provided false information on the loan documents and arranged for inflated appraisals in order to receive

approval for the loans. Many of the buyers would not have qualified for the loans if true information had been given to the lenders.

During the first conspiracy, from May through October 1999, **Barber** was a client of Ameriquest Mortgage. During that period, he conspired with co-defendants **Nicodemus, Roderick Neil Criss**, 34, of Kansas City, who was the branch manager, and **Cauncey Calvert**, 35, of Kansas City, who was an account executive, to defraud Ameriquest.

As a result of that conspiracy, Ameriquest Mortgage approved 66 fraudulent loans totaling \$4 million.

**Snodgrass** pleaded guilty on Feb. 17, 2005, to her role in that mortgage fraud conspiracy. **Snodgrass** admitted that she provided artificially inflated appraisals on properties for which **Barber** was seeking mortgage loans from Ameriquest, Countrywide Home Loans and Hamilton Mortgage. In return, she received fees and other benefits.

Between June 9, 1999, and Nov. 1, 2000, in response to requests from co-conspirators, **Snodgrass** prepared 75 false and fraudulent appraisals, inflating the values of the properties, misrepresenting the work she had done to prepare the appraisals, and at times misrepresenting the condition of the properties.

For example, **Snodgrass** prepared and submitted a fraudulent appraisal for property at 29 E. 32<sup>nd</sup> St., Kansas City, Mo., for \$73,000 in response to a request from a co-conspirator. **Snodgrass** stated that she personally inspected the property and that it was in good to average condition with no observable external depreciation. In reality, the house had failed city codes inspections and was on track for demolition based on findings that the building was dangerous and a nuisance, that the foundation and siding were cracked, and that the frame, guard rail, roof, gutters, porch, soffit, and fascia were damaged, decayed, or deteriorated.

In a separate but related case, real estate appraiser **Phillip Thomas**, 50, of Kansas City-North, pleaded guilty on April 27, 2005, to conspiracy, wire fraud and money laundering.

These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Linda Parker Marshall and Daniel M. Nelson. They were investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, IRS-Criminal Investigation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Inspector General, with cooperation of the Kansas City, Mo., prosecuting attorney.

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This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

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